



**Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow,
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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's upcoming meeting with Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Mikhail Myasnikovich

On October 5, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will meet with Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Mikhail Myasnikovich.

The discussion will focus on the priorities of the Russian chairmanship of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2023, as well as the EAEU's international agenda.

The Russian side attaches great importance to the development of cooperation within the Union, as well as the establishment of constructive cooperation between the EAEU and foreign partners, and the promotion of the Eurasian agenda at international platforms.

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Meeting of the United Russia Party General Council Commission on International Cooperation and Support for Compatriots Living Abroad

On October 7, Sergey Lavrov will hold, via videoconference, the fourth meeting of the United Russia Party General Council Commission for International Cooperation and Support for Compatriots Living Abroad, established by instruction of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which will take place in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on the sidelines of the international inter-party conference New Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development (October 6-7).

The meeting will focus on public and political support for environmental security in the Asia-Pacific region. There are also plans to discuss the further development of inter-party cooperation, aimed at strengthening the diverse ties of Eurasian states.

The inter-party conference will be attended by representatives of leading political parties from South and South-East Asia, Latin America and the CIS. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will deliver a video address to the conference participants.

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Donbass and Ukraine update

On September 27, the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions completed referendums on accession to the Russian Federation. The high voter turnout and the results speak for themselves: the people in those regions do not want to return to their former lives. They have paid a high price for their future and proved that they have the right to a peaceful life. These people have rebelled against terrorism and the dragged-out war the Kiev neo-Nazi regime unleashed against its own people. This is how it went in Donbass, and later in the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions.

Once again, I am highlighting something that is obvious to anyone who has been truly interested in these developments, and not just relying on the global mainstream "news." These people have made a conscious and free choice. They have declared, loudly and firmly, to the whole world their desire to be together with Russia from now on, to link their future forever with our country, which was, is and will be their historical homeland.

They had given Ukraine a chance to treat them as its citizens. The Kiev regime, the politicians who lost their independence and delegated decision-making to their foreign handlers, failed to take advantage of that high honour. Perhaps some well-fed and pompous witnesses of liberal totalitarianism, many of whom are now queuing outside foreign embassies here, are unable to understand this. They think "well-being" is about maintaining their petty, narrow comfort zone. It's beyond their scope to think about others. They know nothing about compassion or making sacrifices for the sake of a loved one, or for the sake of someone who asks for help. They don't know what these things are; it happens.

I am saying this to those who have been professing the logic of a liberal dictatorship for many years. The spirit is stronger than circumstances, threats or temptations. I am addressing the Western countries. You and we have different "prides." You chose to rely on your partners "in the flesh," and we chose partners in spirit.

I want to stress that the referendums in the DPR, LPR, and the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions have been held in full accordance with the norms and principles of international law (no matter how strongly anyone might dislike this); they were fully legal and did not run counter to world practice. Many would ask: which norms and principles? Where can they be found? They're right there. In the fundamental body of international law, including the UN Charter and other documents adopted by the United Nations. Just allow yourself to be objective. Try to see not what you want to see or what is being imposed on you – but try to analyze the situation thoughtfully, relying on historical facts and current realities, and assess what happened in full accordance with international law.

Both Kiev and the West are well aware of this. They only pretend they don't understand. They do not want to allow the public in their countries to understand or assess the situation from the point of view of international law. The people of Donbass and southern Ukraine have exercised their right to self-determination. Let someone say it is not so. They did this in accordance with the UN Charter, as well as with those practices and norms that the West had never denied before, and even sometimes applied. However, the Zelensky regime and its American handlers do not want to accept reality, or to see this side of international law. On the contrary, they cynically question the procedure for holding a plebiscite and its results, dismissing them as insignificant and incompatible with democracy. What was the word Vladimir Zelensky used [to call the people in Donbass]? Inhuman species? Is this why what they want is insignificant? No. They are questioning both essence and form. Labeling and calling names. They are doing everything to show off their importance and prove they are right. They are using the sacred – the icon of democracy. This would make sense if they themselves had not deviated from it a long time ago. Look who is doing this – those who have been grossly violating human rights for years – in Ukraine, in the Western countries, as well as in countries they have occupied in various parts of the world. They have contributed to transforming the young Ukrainian state into a totalitarian, aggressive, neo-Nazi regime, encouraging it with money and arms supplies to use artillery on peaceful cities. I can see that for these people, the referendum is nothing, of course. All they heed is the voice of guns. People's voices don't matter to them. And neither do the lives of each of the inhabitants of the regions in question.

As soon as the referendums in the DPR, the LPR, and the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions were announced, Kiev sharply intensified the shelling of these areas in feeble outrage. Didn't the same happen in February 2022 when Russia recognised their sovereignty? Didn't it start the same way? Didn't we see the same thing when all participants signed the Minsk agreements? Having displayed goodwill, Russia suggested following the path of peace, talks and political efforts, and drafted the Minsk package of agreements. What happened a couple of months after everyone left Minsk? We saw the bestial grin of the Kiev regime when they started "fulfilling" these peace agreements. If they had been allowed, they would have smashed everything in their way but they were simply not allowed to do this and won't be allowed to do it in the future.

The blows were deliberately inflicted on large groups of people to prevent them from voting. Listen to what people are saying in these regions. They were looking for a chance to leave their homes and run in short bursts to the polling stations. This is in the 21st century. Advanced democracies were destroying people who wanted to vote at a referendum. How many civilian facilities have been destroyed in these years? On this day alone, attacks were carried out on a gas pipeline, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, cultural centres and markets. You don't see this, our freedom-lovers? Or is it again because these are the "wrong" people? Or, are they not people at all in the West's opinion?

In the process, the Kiev regime was using US-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launchers. The Ukrainian armed forces always coordinate the final choice of targets with the US military command. Judging by everything we see, representatives of this command have assumed real control over Ukraine's forces. The goal of these terrorist attacks is clear – to intimidate the people, force them to renounce their choice, drive all of them into a corner and make them believe that there is no justice in this world, that there will never be any. This is an attempt to make them believe that the rule of force will always prevail. But this is not so. These are the people of Donbass. Life has hardened them. They have a spirit, and freedom in the true sense of the word. The people of Donbass, and the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions have not been broken. Washington demonstrated again to what extent it had lost touch with reality, having actually become a party to the conflict.

More evidence of this is the tentative agreement reached in the US Congress the other day on granting Kiev a new package of aid to the tune of almost \$12 billion. What are these funds spent on? On schools, hospitals, a gas or oil pipeline? On the purchase of manuals, benefits for the poor, measures to counter the pandemic? Certainly not. The lion's share of these funds will again be spent on the purchase of arms for Kiev and will "dissolve" in the pockets of those who allocate them. The amount of US financial aid to the Zelensky regime will soon reach an astronomical \$26 billion (since Joseph Biden's inauguration, Washington alone has spent over \$14 billion on Ukraine's military needs). Nothing to be sorry about. In their view, these arms kill "species," not humans. So, no pity for them at all. The United States is printing empty, completely unsecured money. We are seeing that no amount of money will help the Kiev regime regain control over the people who have chosen freedom instead of coercion. What weren't they promised! They were not only intimidated. Attempts were made "to buy" them at some point, they were promised "manna from heaven," all kinds of well-being, and a visa-free regime with the European Union (which was denied to our country for unknown reasons). Years ago, they simply told us that they failed to coordinate technical issues and then shut off the negotiating process. All those who swore allegiance to liberal totalitarianism were presented with this visa-free regime and were allowed "to play."

These people were promised many things. It is surprising that in the 21st century they truly chose freedom of conscience and historical memory. They chose freedom without which no future is possible. They turned down sweet slavery for which they had to renounce themselves.

The Kiev regime should not hope for outside aid in its attempts to rock the boat in Russia. It failed to do this and will never succeed. We will uphold the freedom and independence of our state. Our people remain loyal to the historical heritage of their predecessors. In times of trial, they pooled their efforts and stood up to defend their homeland without any ethnic, class or political distinctions. They saw that they were needed and stood up. The same is taking place now. We advise those who doubt this to reread the pages of history, especially of the Great Patriotic War. While rereading, look what publishing house issued it to avoid a version released with the blessing of the Kiev regime or of some American institute of historical studies (or Britain's, God forbid), with numerous falsifications and opportunistic adjustments. Read real documents that convincingly depict the heroism of the Soviet people who crushed the enemy and defeated Nazism. At that time, they were not entirely sure what they opposed. Only we managed, by looking into the past, to understand the scale of what had been planned for us. Our ancestors were promised (like we are being promised now, along with threats) a sweet life and a bright, luxurious future. On the one hand, they made all these promises, throwing leaflets, "Russian Ivan, give up!" and, on the other, they killed people in gas chambers. The plans of what they wanted to do with us were signed long before 1941.

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New insinuations around the town of Izyum in Western media

When commenting on the course of the special military operation in Ukraine, we have repeatedly drawn public attention to the absolutely unacceptable actions of the Ukrainian army and nationalist units that violate all the principles and norms of international humanitarian law. They are guided by NATO manuals and using the tactics of ISIS, setting up firing positions and ammunition depots in schools, hospitals, and residential buildings, using civilians as a human shield, and shooting refugees. All this has resulted in numerous civilian casualties. There is no need to talk about infrastructure: it is being shelled exactly so that the civilian population cannot exist, cannot survive.

In this context, we are not surprised to see that Western media (I hope there are still people there who can think somehow), including leading Western agencies, remain deaf to the dozens of people dying daily in Donbass in inhuman shelling by heavy weapons supplied by the United States and its allies to Ukraine. In particular, from HIMARS multiple launch rocket systems, the use of which, as they say in Kiev, must be coordinated with the American side for each specific target. Are they really disinterested? And why have there been no investigations? I know. As many American experts tell us, everyone who dared to ask this question (not even write something) is excluded from the information space; they are no longer invited to conferences and events, their articles are not published, they are not given a chance to take interviews. In social media, everything is simple: they learned how to “cancel.” The button is pressed and there is no account, no media, no journalists.

I would like to comment on Izyum. After the regrouping of the allied forces in the Kharkov Region, the Zelensky regime is trying in every possible way to repeat the Bucha scenario (which they tried to author themselves) in this city by artificially fabricating evidence of "crimes" by the Russian military.

They are using the same methods. It is alleged that the Ukrainian police found almost 10 torture prisons, as well as mass graves. Terrible figures are shown: about 450 burial sites. We sent packages of materials about mass graves with genuine photographs and videos to the capitals of Western states. It also became the property of the media. There was no reaction. But these are the same people (as Vladimir Zelensky said, “non-humans,” “beings”) whom they officially call citizens of Ukraine. Where were they in their Kiev “underground?” Were they not interested in the fact that for many years people were buried, including alive? Now, all of a sudden, they’ve “learned” from Hollywood screenplays. The remains are being exhumed to avoid failures like the Kiev regime invented in Bucha.

But they fail at this. There are so many inconsistencies that it is impossible to play up this topic anymore. Many graves say March 9, 2022, while units of the allied forces began to enter Izyum on March 15, 2022, and took control of it by the beginning of April 2022. If these people died from violence and torture, then it was at the hands of the Kiev regime’s punishers.

It is worth noting that right after Izyum was taken by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, on September 9, British journalists from The Daily Telegraph visited the place. They found no traces of massacres and quoted locals as saying there were no arrests, torture or executions. And on September 20, Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada for Human Rights Dmitry Lubinets would not allow Western correspondents (not Russian, they have not been allowed anywhere for almost 10 years, they have been detained at the border, their accreditation is taken away; they are sent back and put on the Mirotvorets website list) there under the pretext of a mine threat. Apparently, The Daily Telegraph correspondents would not have been missed. Let them blow up, right? Was that the logic? And immediately after that, a surge of humanism. And everything is like this. Staged.

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Provocations on Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines

Accidents were reported on three lines of the Nord Stream undersea pipelines on September 27, 2022. Before that, a gas leak was registered near Bornholm island. Because of a hole in the pipe (its causes will be investigated), pressure in the pipeline dropped from 105 to 7 bar. The pipeline's operator, Nord Stream AG, has described the damage as unprecedented. Experts say it is impossible to predict how long it will take to repair the infrastructure.

The Western mainstream media immediately, as if on cue, wrote, citing leaks, unidentified sources and European officials, that the guilty party is Russia, that it is allegedly interested in damaging the pipelines because it doesn't want to supply gas. It appears that Europe can't stand the thought that those it sees as its "allies" might be behind this incident, this provocation, this act of sabotage. The idea seems abominable to them and would mark the point of no return, which is why they cannot allow any other supposition than the time-worn "Russian factor." They can only follow a certain "scenario," because their ideology would collapse otherwise, revealing the uncomfortable truth. But they will have to begin anyway. Brussels will have to tell the EU citizens what they have done to their – our – continent. It is our continent as well. You don't let us live calmly and normally. Numerous EU "experts" and "political analysts" are speaking about Russia's direct or indirect "involvement" (they have upped the stakes and are talking about "sabotage" now and using even harsher terms), and the Americans have joined in. The keynote is that Russia did it because it no longer wants to supply gas to the EU.

Similar statements have been made by Western officials. Vice-President of the government of Spain and Minister for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge Teresa Ribera has put the blame on Russia. An EU official has said this openly. I think we'll soon see a tsunami of "revelations." I presume that the Minister for the Ecological Transition knows everything and holds all the cards.

May I ask a question? When exactly did Russia decide that it no longer wants to supply energy to Europe? According to this logic, there should be a date, a turning point. So, when did we decide that we didn't want to supply energy to our "Western partners?" Did it happen in the 1960s, when we built the Druzhba pipeline? I would like to remind you that it was a period when the Cold War was gathering momentum, when there was the Iron Curtain and dividing walls, when people didn't communicate and there was no contact between our civil societies. Nothing was left of our WWII alliance. Was it at that time that we decided not to supply energy to our "Western partners?" Maybe it happened during the Cuban missile crisis, when NATO weapons systems started encircling us? Was it then that the idea dawned on us because we wanted to reciprocate to NATO's actions against us? No? Did it happen when the Soviet Union fell apart? Or was it in 2014, when large-scale sanctions were adopted against us for the first time? Did we do it in response to these sanctions? It was then that sanctions were for the first time adopted against Russia in such a blatant and frenzied manner. Or did it happen when we started building Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2? Did we build the pipelines, invested in them and provided political and other forms of support to that project only to stop supplying energy to Europe? Is this your logic?

Over the past decades, despite the Cold War and outbursts of seething hot hatred towards us, despite the sanctions, the hybrid war and other dirty tricks used against our country, nobody here said at any level that we wouldn't supply energy to the citizens of Europe. Never. We have always been a reliable supplier of energy to Europe. And who was it that has really decided to cut short the deliveries of Russian energy and rule out the very possibility of such supplies to Europe? I will tell you.

Since the start of the Nord Stream 2 project, all its participants in Russia and other countries have been subjected to unprecedented US economic and political pressure. Is this a revelation to any of you? Can any of you provide facts that would tear my arguments to shreds? Ready to do anything to hinder the construction of the pipeline and its commissioning, the United States passed legislation in 2020 on punishment for companies that took part in the construction or provided relevant services. These open threats of unilateral sanctions over a purely commercial project, which was designed to reinforce Europe's energy security showed that Washington doesn't care one bit for Europe's real economic interests. Russia has begun its own investigation of the Nord Stream accident. Our law enforcement and security agencies announced this yesterday.

I would like to believe that the international investigation into the underwater Baltic Sea pipeline incidents will be objective. A major role in exposing the reasons could be played by an explanation, by the American side (a detailed one, not the White House spokesperson style one) regarding US President Joe Biden's statements made at a news conference on February 7. "If Russia invades — that means tanks or troops crossing the border of Ukraine — then there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it," he said. Shocked, American journalists tried to ask clarifying questions, gasping and stuttering – how will you do that, exactly? And the President of the United States gave them a clear and unequivocal answer: "I promise you we will be able to do it."

US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland pulled the same stunt on January 27, making an official statement at the US State Department: “If Russia invades Ukraine, one way or another, Nord Stream 2 will not move forward... It is a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea.” That was more than six months ago. But this “hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea” kept bothering them. They were ever so concerned about its turbines, they were endlessly going back to intimidating the European consumer, they were quite aggressive in offering their services instead. No. It wasn't a “hunk of metal” or a “dead project.” European countries were doing a lot of work around it. They were aware of how much they needed it. Just as the Russian Federation has always remained a conscientious party to all its contracts and obligations. The United States has already denied its involvement through a Pentagon representative. But we know what they are capable of. We remember how they weren't responsible for a huge number of acts of sabotage and extremism in various corners of the world, for murders and kidnappings. The truth came to light later. So is the Pentagon refuting its president's promises now?

In any case, Washington owes an explanation and a confession now. Why have they delegated this to Mr Sikorski? As an EU Parliament member, he wholeheartedly (that showed what kind of heart he has) thanked the United States for the Russian gas pipeline explosion. Sikorski tweeted “Thank you USA,” adding it was his working theory as to who could have had the “motive and the ability” to sabotage the pipelines. He didn't have to guess, really. Washington had been airing its motives for years through the mouths of both Democrats and Republicans. Both administrations said the same thing: Nord Stream 2 needed to be removed as a factor of global energy cooperation. They said they would spare no effort to prevent the project from being implemented. Opportunities were to be found, schemes and methods to be invented to thwart it once and for all. What other motives do you need? As to their ability, what was he even talking about? Wasn't it in NATO's area of responsibility? Weren't NATO forces conducting exercises in the area? Were there no US soldiers deployed in nearby countries? Is none of this true?

Radoslaw Sikorski (a vocal Americanophile, although still a Polish citizen) actually said Poland had had motives for years to disable those pipelines. The former foreign minister, now a European Parliament member, said: “I am glad that Nord Stream, against which all Polish governments have been fighting for 20 years, is three-quarters paralysed. It's good for Poland.” And here he is, asking who could have had a motive. Who could that be? Really.

We have to point out that NATO held exercises in the vicinity of the island of Bornholm (owned by Denmark) in July of this year, using deep-sea equipment. An interesting opportunity, from the Western politicians' perspective. That region is actually stuffed with NATO military infrastructure. Is this not a factor either? Or will no one notice it? Maybe it was Russia that deployed its naval forces there? Was Russia or another organisation conducting manoeuvres in the area? Is there any evidence? Please, Western partners, share this information if you have it. No one saw anyone there except you. You are constantly engaged in provocations and sham incidents. Only they aren't harmless anymore. They have devolved from intrigues to acts of sabotage and everything that has to do with that.

It is interesting that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines would be "in no-one's interest." Really? It wouldn't be in the interest of Western and Central Europe, the European regions that are part of the Eurasian link between Europe and Asia. No, it wouldn't be in the interest of that group of countries. Neither would it be in the interest of the world as a whole, because it demonstrates total disregard for morality and the law in many Western countries. Washington is the clear beneficiary of this situation. I suggest that Mr Blinken reread his own words and what US presidents said on this issue. He may not see Donald Trump as his president, but what about Joe Biden and Mr Blinken's predecessors? They said a great deal about destroying, shutting down and removing Nord Stream from the agenda and why this would be in the US's interest. You often explained to the Americans why Nord Stream is not in the US's interest. Read those statements again, and you will see who will benefit from the explosions on the Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines.

To summarise what US officials have said over the past years, disabling the pipelines would allow the United States to increase LNG deliveries to the EU. This is not my assessment. It is the essence of the slogans, calls and theses of US officials, both Republicans and Democrats, which they have been working for the past years to implement. The United States never made it a secret that its main goal was to cut Europe off from Russian energy resources. And now Mr Blinken says he doesn't know in whose interest that would be? It would be in your interest! Until September 25, 26 and 27, 2022, Washington didn't succeed. Its threats, blackmail and promises all failed, possibly because the EU has learned to separate lies from the truth. They didn't believe Washington. They decided to implement the project despite the provocations and the bloodbath Washington initiated in the region. They repaired the turbines and did everything else necessary to ensure gas supplies to Europe. The attempts to suspend the project to destroy it economically and politically have failed. And then a series of explosions took place on the pipelines on September 25, 26 and 27, 2022.

Russia has requested an emergency UN Security Council meeting, which will be held on Friday, September 30, over the provocations against Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2. There is one more interesting fact. We called for holding a meeting on September 29. Do you know who was against it? Who needed more time? Who decided to put off the meeting? It was NATO countries on the UN Security Council. They said they could only meet on September 30. We will demand an honest and objective investigation.

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The Russian Emergencies Ministry delivers a relief consignment to Pakistan on September 21, 2022

On September 21, the Russian Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief executed a special air flight to Pakistan, delivering 35 tonnes of relief supplies (basic necessities, food, water purification systems, etc.) following disastrous floods caused by unprecedented devastating seasonal rains. The humanitarian aid was sent on instructions from President of Russia Vladimir Putin. Participating in the aid acceptance ceremony were members of the government of Pakistan's Sindh Province and representatives of Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, who expressed sincere gratitude to Russia for its support.

We express solidarity with the Pakistani people in this difficult period and wish that they overcome the consequences of this natural disaster as soon as possible.

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Cooperation in peaceful space exploration

The Russian Federation has a tradition of celebrating the World Space Week, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1999. The celebrations will be held on October 4-10, and this year, the world will mark two significant dates and space anniversaries: on October 4, 65 years ago, the Soviet Union launched the first artificial earth satellite in human history and on October 10, 55 years ago, the Outer Space Treaty, the cornerstone of international space law, came into force.

As the space trail-blazer, this country consistently advocates its peaceful exploration on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis. We hope that the international community will do its utmost to achieve this noble aim, using, among other things, the potential inherent in the World Space Week. We are in favour of strengthening its role and preventing the politicisation of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space as a unique international venue tasked with regulating a wide range of issues related to orbital activities.

We intend to continue constructive cooperation with all those involved in space activities and welcome any initiatives and projects aimed at exploring and using outer space in the interests of the whole of mankind rather than individual players.

We proceed from the premise that despite an unprecedented, Washington-instigated deterioration of Russian-American relations, it is in the interests of both countries to maintain pragmatic collaboration in outer space. It goes without saying that we welcome the Roscosmos-NASA July 2022 agreement on cross-flights. Under the agreement, Russia's Soyuz MS-22 spaceship (bearing the name of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky in honour of the 165th birth anniversary of the founder of theoretical cosmonautics) delivered to the ISS on September 21 a combined Russian-American crew composed of Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitry Petelin and NASA astronaut Francisco Rubio. A Russian cosmonaut, Anna Kikina, is expected to fly to the ISS on board NASA's Crew Dragon on October 3.

We hope that the existing plans will be implemented in full and that the US will start being guided by common sense in our bilateral relations, not to mention good will.

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Conference on Crimes of Militarist Japan: Historical and Modern Aspects

On September 28, 2022, the Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Academy hosted an international panel conference called Crimes of Militarist Japan: Historical and Modern Aspects. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sent a message of greetings to its organisers and participants, in which he noted the relevance of the conference in the context of countering attempts of certain countries to rewrite the results of World War II and to whitewash criminals who placed entire nations on the verge of destruction over 80 years ago.

We would like to note that this conference involved numerous experts and professionals, Russian and foreign researcher. The conference featured profound and detailed discussions of various subjects, such as The Aggressive Policy of Militarist Japan in 1930-1940 and Preparations for a War against the Soviet Union, The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo: 1946-1948 and the Khabarovsk Trial of 1949 and Modern Times.

We would like to emphasise that the complete Russian-language text of the verdict passed by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo was presented at the Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Academy for the first time. Duly witnessed by a notary, the text of the verdict is stored at the State Archive of the Russian Federation and still serves as a basis for legal proceedings. We firmly believe that it is necessary to continue these legal proceedings until all crimes of Japanese militarism have been exposed and the culprits punished.

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UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022

On September 28, 2022, the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022 opened in Mexico City. Convened by UNESCO and the Government of Mexico 40 years after the history-making World Conference on Cultural Policies in 1982, this event involves about 160 delegations from UNESCO member states, as well as representatives of its associated members, non-profit partner organisations, and intergovernmental organisations, including those from the UN Family. The agenda includes discussions on the role of culture in international cooperation and the economy, including efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The delegates prioritise issues linked with an inventory of current regulatory tools in the cultural policy sphere, and aim to chart new approaches towards developing creative industries. They are also expected to institute a permanent Global Forum on Cultural Policy at the end of the conference.

A large delegation of the Russian Federation headed by First Deputy Minister of Culture Sergey Obryvalin is taking part in the conference. Mr Obryvalin will deliver his policy speech on September 29 at a thematic session called Renewed and Strengthened Cultural Policies.

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81st anniversary of Babi Yar mass executions

Today, September 29, is the 81st anniversary of the beginning of mass executions of the Jewish population by the Nazis at the outskirts of the occupied Kiev in Babi Yar. As we know, over a short period of time, 33,771 people were killed in the massacre – women, children and seniors. It is estimated that between 1941 and 1943, 70,000 to 100,000 people in total were executed in the ravine, that is different ethnicities, prisoners of war, concentration camp prisoners, priests, underground resistance fighters, party members and ordinary civilians. Monuments to those who fought against those crimes are being demolished across Europe today, as if under a pretext, even though it has been a decades-long effort. Who needs more evidence? Isn't it what we all are standing against?

During the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet government repeatedly informed the international community about the occupiers' atrocities and brutality, about Holocaust victims, including the mass murders of Jews in the Babi Yar ravine and other death camps.

I will never accept the fact that, after the horrendous catastrophes that people on our planet went through, we will only remember the victims, without honouring the memory of and respecting those who prevented those tragedies from spilling over and who sacrificed their lives for those who were killed. We are witnessing the same things happening today. And it is impossible to disregard the victims. It is a fact that cannot be cut out of history. Instead, as the collective West and its satellites believe, it is possible to scorn those who, as they think, never existed, but who actually liberated them and stalled that death factory. This is what they believe and how they act: alright, keep the victims. Although, unfortunately, there is still segregation. Nobody is supposed to know that there were liberators. Liberators will be whoever the West designates, and the others, as they believe, do not even deserve mentioning. Do you know why? It is the same logic. They are not humans or, as Vladimir Zelensky said, they are “creatures.” Representatives of the Soviet Union exposed evidence of such beliefs during the Nuremberg Trials.

Decades later, as a result of an armed anti-constitutional coup, forces openly promoting the ideas of national exceptionalism and glorifying the fascist henchmen who were complicit in the executions of thousands of people, including Jews, came to power in 2014 in Ukraine. I just can't wrap my head around this fact. What about the others? How are they inferior, peoples from other countries who also perished in gas chambers and were buried alive in mass graves, killed and tortured? Are we no longer talking about them? But we will.

Neo-Nazism has reached a threatening scale in Ukraine. Supporters and practitioners of this misanthropic ideology (today it is an ideology that has become reality) are once again seeking to crush all dissent and to physically eradicate their opponents, just like their ideological masterminds from Hitler's Germany. We know of so many accounts. The same thing is happening. Look, prisoners become expendables; civilians are tortured. Just like in Nazi Germany, entire stories are being fabricated, and entire cities become the stage for these productions. The exact same things happened then. We see cultural monuments being destroyed, wrong books prohibited, unwanted media outlets shut down, political opposition parties driven out, “compromised” citizens persecuted simply because they consider themselves part of a different culture or just think differently. They are being segregated, to put it mildly, based on ethnicity and language.

The Ukrainian neo-Nazis have long been infatuated with impunity. The atrocities committed by them in Donbass and other regions of the country make our blood run cold. Not because we are afraid, but because we are horrified that it became possible after all the lessons of history. Why? Because these lessons were forgotten. Everything that was unwanted or did not fit into the Western model of supremacy was rubbed out. They claim they won all alone. They claim that two evil empires decided to take on each other in the 20th century, putting the world on the verge of a disaster. This is how those events are presented. Those who did not learn the lessons of the past well enough are going through them again. We have spoken about this so many times. Apparently, everybody has forgotten where pacifying fascism leads us, and what price the people of Europe had to pay to get rid of the horrors of the “brown plague.”

Russia, a country that toiled through the hardships of fighting Nazism, will do everything to destroy it and prevent the tragic mistakes of the past from being made again.

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International Day for Universal Access to Information

September 28 marked seven years since the UNESCO General Conference established the International Day for Universal Access to Information in 2015. Adopted back in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets forth in Article 19 the right for everyone to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. Today, 74 years later, we have every reason to state that this fundamental freedom (right to freedom of expression, to seek, receive and impart information) has been trampled by the very liberal and totalitarian regimes which pay so much lip service to democracy, media freedom and the freedom of expression.

We deeply regret the fact that there is not much to celebrate, since the Western media aggression has made ensuring universal access to information in the original sense of the term impossible. Originally conceived as a day for raising international awareness on the key role media pluralism plays in building a genuine democracy, the International Day for Universal Access to Information increasingly resembles a phony ritual designed to create an appearance that everything is well in this sphere. But what is the actual situation? We are witnessing a frontal attack on the global information space by totalitarian neo-liberal censorship.

The West has so far succeeded in purging almost the entire media space of alternative points of view by relying on a wide range of the dirtiest methods. Those who have dissenting views become domestic terrorists in the United States. The Russian media and journalists were the first to suffer this blow: cancelled, removed from the air, blocked broadcasting, designated on sanctions lists, deleted from social media and video hosting services, and subjected to criminal prosecution for many years now. The repression has become so intensive that we had to open a special section to chronicle these abuses on the Foreign Ministry website. We regularly update information on these reprisals. I have talked about this many times. Dominated by the West, specialised international agencies try to pretend that there is nothing that deserves their attention or requires an adequate assessment, as if everything was fine. By acting this way, they encourage even greater fragmentation across the global information space and undermine the system designed to safeguard the human right to free access to information. Where is this freedom of access to information? Just look at what happened over the past days.

This media inquisition continues even today, as we speak, taking on increasingly perverse and sophisticated forms. This week alone, Apple Inc., a US company, deleted a whole series of applications forming VK's ecosystem from its AppStore. This was done to create maximum challenges for millions of people when trying to exchange any information. There is another recent example – the total ban by the Lithuanian lawmakers on broadcasting any Russian or Belarusian media products in the country regardless of their content. So what about international safeguards enabling anyone to freely receive and impart information? Didn't they mention this? This time, Vilnius did not even bother present any formal justification. This is ridiculous, since there is no way to justify this. A justification simply does not exist. Senior executives at Meta, a corporation banned in Russia, recognised that they work with US intelligence agencies and said that they regularly censor accounts on their online platforms at their discretion and following up on their contacts with the US intelligence agencies. These are just the most notable developments we saw over the past few days. This is the reality we live in. How much has been done and will be done? What a wonderful backdrop for the International Day for Universal Access to Information. Has anybody in the West spoken out on this issue? Has anyone said or done anything? What about the international unions of journalists, correspondents, or associations defending the freedom of speech? There are so many of them. The US Department of State feeds hundreds of thousands of them through its grants. Where are you all?

We are certain that the West will not succeed in its efforts to seal societies in their isolated media bubbles with a lopsided projection of the world free from any additives. Otherwise, this will be the end for them. The truth will find a way to break through. This has already happened before. I think that this will also be the case now no matter how hard the liberal censors try to shield themselves from information and facts. Let us hope that while this is happening this day will not digress into an entertainment event deprived of any meaning.

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International Translation Day

September 30 marks the feast of St Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, and who is considered the patron saint of translators and interpreters. On May 24, 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 71/288 on declaring September 30 as International Translation Day.

Professional translations emerged as a trade and an art at the dawn of civilisation together with early relations between groups of people speaking different languages. They have always been and remain an inalienable element of searching for and establishing mutual understanding between people, nations and countries. This task is quite topical nowadays.

Professional translations play a substantial role in the work of the Russian Foreign Ministry. The Department of Linguistic Support, which evolved from the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Translations Bureau (established in 1955), brings together top-notch translators, interpreters and terminology specialists.

We are proud to note that our translators and interpreters working successfully at high and highest levels enjoy well-deserved recognition as some of the best professionals in the world. They provide vital support for numerous important foreign policy events, including today's briefing. Thank you very much, colleagues.

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The 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Madagascar

On September 29, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Madagascar are marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

The Soviet Union was among the first states to recognise the independence of the Malagasy Republic in 1960. Although both countries launched interstate contacts in various fields, including trade, science, technological and cultural exchanges, the diplomatic relations were officially established only in 1972, for a number of political reasons.

For five decades, Moscow and Antananarivo have been maintaining traditionally friendly and partner-like ties based on principles of mutual respect and consideration for each other's interests. Today, Russia and Madagascar are constructive in their international interactions, sharing similar positions on the processes unfolding around the world and the new geopolitical environment. They take similar approaches to addressing topical issues and challenges on the global and regional agenda.

We coordinate our actions at the UN and other multilateral venues, we work jointly to facilitate stability and security in East Africa and the western sector of the Indian Ocean.

Our engagement in various fields, including trade, the economy, science, technology and education, continues to develop steadily. The contractual and legal framework of bilateral cooperation is also expanding actively.

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60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Russia and Burundi

On October 1, we will mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Burundi. All these years, our relations with that African state were friendly and based on the principle of mutual respect, trust and a balance of interests.

The positions of Russia and Burundi on the majority of international issues are similar or coincide. Our Burundian partners have taken a prudent and balanced stand on the situation in our region. They reject the harsh anti-Russia line being forced on them by the collective West.

Russia and Burundi maintain an active political dialogue. Our foreign policy departments are holding regular consultations based on the protocol signed in Bujumbura in June 2010. In November 2019, Foreign Minister of Burundi Ezechiel Nibigira visited Russia.

We have been working to boost our mutually beneficial ties in trade, the economy, investment and humanitarian cooperation. Russia is providing practical assistance to attaining goals in healthcare, education and food security, which are important to Burundi.

Russia and Burundi appreciate the achievements made during the 60 years of joint efforts, and we are resolved to continue to strengthen our friendship and multifaceted cooperation to the benefit of our nations and in the interests of peace and security in Africa.

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Answers to media questions:

Question: Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban has announced plans to launch “national consultations” to ask Hungarians about the EU sanctions against Russia. Would you comment on that initiative?

Maria Zakharova: To begin with, it is an internal affair of a sovereign state. Many people in Europe are concerned about the negative consequences of the EU’s anti-Russia sanctions for their national economies and public wellbeing. All of this was imposed by Washington. Many people are wondering about the expediency of this illegal sanctions policy. It has not been approved by the UN Security Council and has not been legalised in any international procedure. They have no sympathy for us and do not support our policy. By and large, they oppose our policy in a number of areas. This is an objective reality. But these sanctions have returned, boomeranged back at them or missed the target, backfiring at the countries that imposed them on us. These people are aware that these sanctions are destructive and are doing more damage to Europeans than to Russia. At the same time, they see the waves spreading out across the world and note the other regions’ dissatisfaction with this policy, yet they try to point the finger at us. This is probably a residue of the Western colonial mentality. They think that people in developing countries are not capable of understanding some things. No, people in those countries can understand everything very well. The side effects, the losses and problems they are facing are the result of the anti-Russia sanctions adopted by the West.

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Question: How could you comment on the reports in the Mongolian media that an agreement has been reached with Russia on the joint implementation of a project to build a hydropower plant on the Egiin Gol River in the north of that country?

Maria Zakharova: The possibility of building hydraulic facilities on transboundary rivers (in particular, on the Egiin Gol River, which is part of the Selenga River basin, the main source of water for Lake Baikal) gets close attention and is regularly considered in the course of ongoing contacts between our countries.

The environmental safety of Lake Baikal has always been Russia's unconditional priority, and will continue to be one. Our Mongolian partners are well aware of Russia's approaches, which remain unchanged.

We believe it is important to continue bilateral expert consultations between the relevant agencies for a thorough comprehensive study of all aspects of the possible negative impact of Mongolian projects on the hydrology of transboundary rivers, as well as the environmental stability and biodiversity of adjacent regions. We have the appropriate mechanisms in place, including a working group of environmental agencies, regular consultations between the authorised bodies of Russia and Mongolia on the implementation of the intergovernmental agreement on the protection and use of transboundary waters. We consider it important to intensify this dialogue.

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Question: How would you comment on the China National Computer Virus Emergency Response Centre's reports about the attack on the country's Northwestern Polytechnical University in June?

Maria Zakharova: I've seen the publications that you're talking about. The attack on China's Northwestern Polytechnical University took place in June 2022.

The investigation established the US National Security Agency's involvement in the incident. Numerous cases of theft of confidential information, personal data, and long-term espionage on Chinese citizens were revealed. The attack involved 54 proxy servers in 17 countries, including Poland, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Japan and Ukraine.

Washington's illegal actions are further evidence of the policy it has been pursuing to militarise the information landscape. The secret services of the United States and its allies systematically use information and communication technologies (ICT) for surveillance, personal data theft, and carrying out attacks, including under a false flag. At the same time, they rely on the technical capabilities of American companies that have monopolised the international ICT markets. All those actions are of a hybrid nature.

The United States is behaving more and more brazenly in the information landscape. They are not hiding their intentions to reap profits and ensure their own security at the expense of others, and to carry out acts of sabotage. At the same time, they are shifting the blame to anyone but themselves. Their ambition is to assert global digital dominance by force and to promote a “rules-based order” in ICT. Washington, on the other hand, is not going to follow any rules. We remember that they are exceptional – that is, the rules do not apply to them; rules are for everyone else.

We are determined to continue to draw the world’s attention to US cyber policy of escalating international tensions, to expose the Western states’ neocolonial plans, their aggressive and malicious aspirations against Russia and developing countries, and their false rhetoric to protect information peace and security, which they are hiding behind. The world should know its anti-heroes as well.

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Question: What is your comment on Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis’ call to Russians to stage a mutiny in Russia?

Maria Zakharova: Did the Lithuanian foreign minister call for a “mutiny” in Russia? If we use his language, Lithuania will be liberated from its liberal dictatorship and become free. Whether this takes place through a mutiny or by some other method is up to Mr Landsbergis to tell you. He is the master of “overthrows,” “liberations,” etc. Let him take care of his own country.

I would like to remind you that the Russian Federation’s laws criminalise public calls for violence against elected authorities. I am saying this just in case, for those who may have become unaware. I feel sorry for those people who think that illegal Russophobic instigations like this are the only way to improve their popularity and to divert the Lithuanian public from their real problems. In a political sense, they are demonstrating their own insignificance.

By the way, Lithuania is not the only country to call for this. We see that this campaign has been instigated from outside. They have been saying how they will “reformat” us for years. They can “reformat” their own countries. They have a huge number of problems of their own. I am saying this about both the West in general and Lithuania and its political system, which has adopted the worst totalitarian practices that existed not only in the Soviet Union (from which it fled) but also in the whole world. These are the problems that Mr Landsbergis should address. As for us, we will decide on our own how to live in our country. No one is interested in his opinion. That’s the big problem. And Westerners are unable to reconcile with this.

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Question: A scandal is raging in Chisinau over the dismissal of Constantin Haret, director of the Anton Chekhov Theatre. Do you think the Moldovan Ministry of Culture was politically motivated in this move?

Maria Zakharova: I will not comment on or go into detail on the legal aspects of this matter. This is the Republic of Moldova's internal affair. I wouldn't want to talk about this. But we cannot neglect the general sociopolitical context in which this decision was made.

We have repeatedly highlighted the fact that outside forces are trying to impose an anti-Russia agenda on the Moldovan authorities (and regrettably, they are successful in many respects) and prod Chisinau into taking a stance that includes banning the Russian language and culture and undermining the cultural and humanitarian ties with Russia. There has been sabotage on gas pipelines, and here we see the Russian culture being sabotaged, the link between the peoples of our two countries, individuals, and families. They are sabotaging people's destinies. In this context, we can understand those who believe that in effect the decision with regard to the Russian Drama Theatre, and its director Constantin Haret, is aimed at a change in management at the theatre and a subsequent reformatting. The thing is, its Russian-language repertoire does not fit in with Chisinau's "European integration" agenda. Many city residents fear that the theatre will be demolished and replaced by a shopping centre. Various alternatives are being suggested.

We would like to hope that this will not happen. We have clearly formulated our attitude to any state's sovereign right to implement its laws. But a high number of their decisions are imbued with an anti-Russia subtext. And they say as much in public. This rhetoric is imposed on people and then portrayed as something popular. In fact, however, we see that this is not so. And these are also objective data.

If someone in Chisinau decides that we have no right to comment on this, they should wait. The current patrons of the many political forces in Moldova have taught us that human rights and values required a particular attention of the international community. Moreover, the "grandees" (the powers that have preached and implemented this approach for years) do this day in and day out. We have always thought that these matters should be dealt with at specialised institutions.

The United States and many European countries have endlessly pointed out to everyone how others should conduct their cultural policies and implement laws, including in a cultural context. There is no end to the things we have seen in Russia. From abroad, we were told which Russian theatres were okay and which were not; which productions we needed; which Russian authors should be deleted from world culture, and which should be introduced in its hall of glory. We have seen a lot from the current political tutors in Chisinau.

We need to answer one question: if the Moldovan politicians dotting on Western values think this is normal, then they should also consider it normal to apply the same standards to them as well. Otherwise it must be said that they do not share this approach and that every sovereign state has an exclusive right to go about its affairs as it sees fit. They need to make a choice.

Let me remind you that apart from everything else, there are international documents regulating – in Europe and elsewhere – whatever a state can do with regard to language groups, ethnic minorities and so on.

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Question: Can the Foreign Ministry confirm reports that Russian and US delegations are preparing to meet in person to discuss the resumption of inspections under the New START? Have a date and venue for the talks been set?

Maria Zakharova: We have always been committed to complying with the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.

Regarding inspections under the New START, they were suspended in early 2020 upon mutual agreement with the United States due to the coronavirus pandemic. We are reviewing the question of resuming them, using the appropriate channels for engaging in a dialogue on ways for the parties to return to full compliance with the Treaty's control mechanisms. This is primarily the Bilateral Consultative Commission under the New START Treaty. We are currently exploring alternatives for holding its regular in-person meeting. The commission is also working remotely to discuss the organisational and technical aspects that must be resolved. We have been able to resolve some of them while achieving substantial progress on others. Still, there are quite a few major challenges left.

I would like to note that the unconstructive actions by the United States and its partners against Russia who continue imposing new sanctions and restrictions stand in the way of normal interactions between the two sides, making it harder to carry out what are the de facto routine inspections under the treaty. We will seek to resolve all the issues related to the treaty on an equal footing, based on our national interests.

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Question: First Deputy Chair of the Federation Council Committee for International Affairs, Federal Security Service General Vladimir Dzhubarov said that if the investigation into the incidents with the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines confirms that the United States was involved in the attack, “the situation could change radically.” What is the current status of the Nord Stream lines that were damaged in this incident? If it is confirmed that the incident was a targeted act of sabotage, how will Moscow respond?

Maria Zakharova: The situation has already changed. Are calls to stop the Nord Stream pipeline, which is a civilian infrastructure facility, the intimidation of maintenance personnel or those involved in the project, or promises to put an end to it not enough?

What did the West do to Julian Assange for publishing genuine documents, analysing them and writing about them? They said he was a national security threat, etc. We are seeing incitement to a crime here. You do not have to be a lawyer to know this. All you have to do is translate three phrases from English and read them in any language. This was a direct attack against a civilian infrastructure facility linking the continent’s major economies, the disruption of which could result in massive environmental damage, which is already happening. This comes from top US government officials, the president and other senior officials, including from the US Department of State. There have been countless media reports ordered, planted and written in recent years on this topic. Is this not enough to understand who we are dealing with and assess our relations with this administration and regime? Everything changed a long time ago.

In this case, it is about finding the perpetrators and holding them accountable, if it is proven that this explosion was intentional. You know how our law enforcement agencies framed this issue. They referred to it as international terrorism. Feel free to ask them other details.

Not only are we interested in getting to the bottom of this, but we are among the owners of these projects and the resources they transport.

You can ask Gazprom, a Russian company, for its comments to learn about the losses we are incurring. There were so many articles on Russia investing heavily in this project, and how much we had to endure from the destructive actions of the US administration. There is no doubt left. We have long known who we are dealing with.

US leadership announced its destructive plans and promised to deliver on them. This process is now underway.

We are now witnessing this in practice.

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Question: There is talk that Russia may start mobilisation in Donbass, Zaporozhye and Kherson as soon as these regions officially join the Russian Federation. Is there any confirmation of this?

Maria Zakharova: This is the wrong way to phrase the question. Mobilisation concerns Russian citizens. The details were clarified by the Russian Defence Ministry. If you have any other questions, ask them. They answer questions online.

Regarding the historical context, you mentioned Donbass. Have you not seen the people of these regions (I mean Donbass) defending their right to life, freedom and genuine (not imagined) independence from the totalitarian neo-Nazi ideology forced on them, defending themselves for many years with weapons in their hands?

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Question: Russian Ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Antonov, said the United States is approaching a dangerous line when US officials talk about the possibility of striking at Donbass, Zaporozhye and Kherson. What is Moscow's assessment of the potential of a direct military conflict with the United States or NATO?

Maria Zakharova: We have spoken about this many times. Our ambassador in Washington accurately described the current situation.

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Question: Relations between Russia and the United States have been deteriorating for a long time. There have even been claims that diplomatic relations could be severed. If that happens, what does it mean and what practical consequences will follow?

Maria Zakharova: I would not want to hypothesise on this topic. We did not initiate the deterioration of relations with the United States. For theories, you should approach the ideologists of this movement in Washington. It was the United States, not Russia, who deliberately ruined bilateral relations. And they have used various methods over the years: endless sanctions, efforts to break up our natural relations with many Western countries, restricting the work of our diplomatic missions, creating threats and obstacles to Russian businesses, seizing buildings and structures that are protected by diplomatic immunity, kidnapping Russian citizens, exerting information and political pressure and blackmailing Russian citizens, corporations and entire segments of society. They essentially took this relationship down with their dirty visa games, segregation and interference in domestic affairs.

The United States announced that their goal was to strategically crush Russia in Ukraine, thus making themselves a party to the conflict. I don't know what other step they can take; perhaps only severing diplomatic relations. I don't know how far they can go with this destructive approach.

We have commented on this many times. I will not repeat myself. The position of the Russian leadership (the country's leader, the foreign affairs and other ministries) remains relevant.

We have never initiated anything that would specifically hurt bilateral relations, either recently or in the past. We have only responded to unfriendly actions – and in many cases, without the savage fury that the US's actions are full of. We gave a neutral and emotionless response to make sure the strike does not affect our citizens, civil society or the public.

We have seen the United States take actions that simply trample over our bilateral relations.

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Question: Many times, including in an interview with the Anadolu Agency, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres indicated that the UN was undertaking major efforts to expedite Russian fertiliser exports to global markets. He highly appreciated Türkiye's efforts in this regard. What's your take on the Western countries' position?

Maria Zakharova: The Western countries' position is interesting from a practical point of view rather than in theory. They do their part only under substantive pressure, including on the part of the UN. They don't want to do it as a matter of course. It's not that they can't, they just don't want to. We expect the UN to step up its efforts to get the Europeans and the Americans to lift a range of obstacles that stand in the way of Russia's unimpeded fertiliser and grain shipping to international markets.

The issue is about allowing Russian ships to enter European ports and foreign ships to enter Russian ports. Sanctions on Rosselkhozbank, which carries out the bulk of all fertiliser and food-related transactions, must be lifted. The countries, in particular, the African countries, the food security of which the West is so worried about, are pointing to the lack of logic in the existing approach. They are being convinced that they need food and fertiliser and the same people are blocking the accounts of the Russian entity that handles the payments.

We need progress on these and other matters and open recognition of the fact that the West is engaged, once again, in mind games and is not going to do anything about it, and that they absolutely do not care about the countries they were using as a cover to initiate the deal.

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Question: Recently, rallies were held in Yerevan demanding Armenia's withdrawal from the CSTO. A number of high-ranking Armenian officials were dissatisfied with the organisation's response to the border conflicts with Azerbaijan. What does the Foreign Ministry have to say regarding relations with Yerevan within the CSTO and how likely is Armenia's withdrawal from the organisation? Of late, the United States has stepped up its activities in the Caucasus, and word is out that Washington may provide military assistance to Yerevan in exchange for it withdrawing from the CSTO. How will Russia respond if this happens?

Maria Zakharova: Unfounded criticism of the CSTO from individual political figures does no good and is not helpful if we want to come up with well thought-out and mutually acceptable solutions. Wherever these politicians may be based, these destructive messages are of little use.

Today (September 29), in Yerevan, CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas forwarded assessments of a proposal based on the outcome of the CSTO mission to the Republic of Armenia (September 15-23) to Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan. The mission went there under CSTO member state decision to monitor the situation in a number of Armenian border regions. Before that, on September 27, Zas delivered a preliminary report at a CSTO Permanent Council meeting. As you are aware, Zas and head of the CSTO Joint Staff Anatoly Sidorov, as well as experts, toured the Armenian-Azerbaijani border to assess the state of affairs on the ground. Additional information will be posted on the CSTO Secretariat's official resources.

With regard to Yerevan's decision to not send a military contingent to the joint CSTO exercises in Kazakhstan this year, Armenia appears to be basing its armed forces' priorities on the current situation, which is its sovereign right.

Our interaction with Armenia within the organisation can be described as productive and effective. Armenia's current CSTO chairmanship coincided with a period of challenges and threats to our collective security, which we must counter as a team. The upcoming CSTO summit in Yerevan is designed to consolidate the organisation's performance over the past 20 years and outline its prospects.

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Question: What about Washington potentially providing it with military assistance?

Maria Zakharova: This matter has been commented on many times by our ministry's top officials and the CSTO.

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Question: Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said after the recent clash on the border that international observers should be deployed in the border regions. What is Moscow's attitude to this proposal?

Maria Zakharova: We stand for the full and unconditional implementation of the agreements reached by the three countries to ensure a settlement of the drawn-out conflict, which has taken a dangerous, bloody turn many times. Ambitious plans have been laid out. These documents have not just been coordinated between the intermediary and each of the sides, but between the countries that have been parties to this long conflict. That is why they are invaluable; they are not a fictitious roadmap but a real one.

Many people, politicians and public figures in different countries that have signed agreements, especially in Armenia and Azerbaijan but also in other countries, would like to replace these agreements with their own ideas. They are making many promises. They know how to do it. However, there is not much they have done over these years. They have not attained any results. The agreements we signed have not remained on paper. They are being implemented gradually, step by step. It does not always happen as planned, because we are striving for the best. But the agreements are effective. The general rule is not to replace what is working with something illusory.

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Question: The US Embassy in Moscow has urged Americans residing in Russia to leave immediately in connection with the partial mobilisation and arrests of American citizens. Would you comment on the US Embassy's alerts? Will Moscow issue a mirror statement urging Russians to leave the United States immediately?

Maria Zakharova: Much of what the US Embassy says remains a mystery. You should ask them what they mean by that. What abductions of American nationals, or threats and arrests, are they referring to? Who exactly do they mean? I would like to remind the US diplomatic service, in particular the US Embassy in Moscow, that there are many US nationals in Russian penal facilities and not only the two Americans whose fate is the issue of heated political debate in the United States. Over the past years, US diplomats have not shown any serious concern for the other American nationals.

I don't want to say that we are working as knights without fear and beyond reproach. Protecting the rights of our citizens is hard work, and we have seen many things while doing it. However, we respond to all the calls and requests we receive, even though there are many more Russian citizens for whom the US administration has not just created problems but has made their life intolerable. Our capabilities are often incomparable to those of American diplomacy. Nevertheless, we work on every request and case in the United States and other countries.

It is one thing if this is just another PR stunt. But if there is any truth in it, you should address your question to them. Ask them for an explanation, and after that, you can tell us what they had in mind, who abducts whom and when they visited any of the many Americans in Russian penal facilities. Many of them have been there for years.

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Question: The White House has long been speculating about Russia potentially using nuclear weapons in Ukraine. This is absolutely illogical from the viewpoint of Russia's doctrine, interests and morality. But the United States has planted the idea. Jake Sullivan has warned about the "catastrophic consequences" of such a step on the programme 60 Minutes. What can you say on this issue?

Maria Zakharova: What issue? Many statements were made that exposed their "information racket," their allegations about what we never said, as well as their offensive and aggressive rhetoric, including their use of nuclear weapon terms. We said a great deal about that.

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Question: What about Jake Sullivan's statement? What is our attitude to such statements?

Maria Zakharova: They are the ones who raised the issue of nuclear weapons. Take Zelensky's statement in February 2022, which was promoted by Washington, the statements made by then Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, and other statements by Zelensky and Tymoshenko, who said that nuclear weapons must be used against Russia. Many Ukrainian officials and Western politicians made such statements. They keep talking about it, and they are doing this openly. I wonder if they understand what they are talking about. I don't think all of them do. Washington never stopped them; on the contrary, it encouraged them. There are more horrible things. Ordinary people think that nuclear weapons are bombs or missiles. What do we see now? We see that the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant has been shelled every day for several months even though they know that this can have irreversible consequences comparable to the use of nuclear weapons. Who is shelling the plant? We said who, it's the Kiev regime. But the pro-Western international officials remain silent or say that it is unclear who is shelling the plant. Somebody has even said that it is Russia that is shelling itself. They stopped saying that. Is this [the shelling of a nuclear power plant] any better than the use of nuclear weapons? Radiation doesn't care how it was unleashed, by using "official" or "dirty" nuclear weapons, or as the result of a disaster at a nuclear facility. The consequences for people and humanity as a whole will be the same. Why hasn't anybody in Washington called on Zelensky or his handlers to stop shelling the plant? No statements have been made to this effect. This means that they are benefiting from this situation. This is the answer to the question about who is using what to threaten others and who is saying what.

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Question: Can you report on the progress of exports of Ukrainian grain and Russian fertilisers? What is the role of Türkiye and the UN in that?

Maria Zakharova: I have already commented on that. There is nothing more I can say. Let's return to this subject later, when we have more facts.

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Question: How do you assess the prospects for relations with Italy after the right-wing coalition's victory there?

Maria Zakharova: We are ready to cooperate with any legitimately elected government of Italy (as well as of other countries). This is our principled approach. We respect the democratic expression of people's will formalised through an election. Every country has its nuances, local peculiarities, local traditions and practices, etc. Our approach in this case remains unchanged.

The current international situation certainly has a significant impact on our relations with Italy. Rome's accession to the West's unbridled support for the criminal Russophobic regime in Kiev has undermined the key mechanisms of bilateral interaction and dialogue, as well as the economic foundations of our cooperation, including mutual trade, energy, and contacts on security issues in Europe. Humanitarian ties between our countries are being artificially blocked.

Italy's outgoing politicians definitely played a significant destructive role in this; in recent months, they actually "spiralled down," verbally. Let me remind you that professionalism in international relations, diplomacy and politics always implies the ability to find arguments that can be presented calmly, without sliding into insults, threats, or name-calling. If people resort to these things, it just means their arguments are not strong enough or they aren't skilled professionals who can convince others with facts or the art of rhetoric. This leads to breakdowns. This has happened in Italian diplomacy and the people in charge of it. We've seen it all.

It is still premature to talk about the prospects for Russian-Italian relations. It will depend on the specific actions and steps the new Italian authorities will take. We have not destroyed relations with anyone. We have been defending our approaches, arguing our cases, which are of an international legal nature. We had to fight for this because of the collective West's subversive and destructive policies. Those who do not understand this are not professionals.

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Question: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has repeatedly stated that the West would try to expel Russia from the UN Security Council based on Russia not being the legal successor to the USSR, and invoking Article 108 of the UN Charter. Does the UN Charter or any other UN document really provide an effective mechanism to expel any permanent member from the UN Security Council? If Russia really found itself outside the UN Security Council, how justified would UN existence be as an organisation? How would this affect the UN structure in general?

Maria Zakharova: The Serbian president's statement is not what we should take as a starting point; before that, we need to consider the twist that the collective West is trying to pull off in political analysis.

This is all reminiscent of primitive times. It looks like the people who are discussing this have not been influenced by any political culture, morality or understanding that, in addition to their desires and instincts, there is a civilisation. When people begin to speculate about ways to exclude a permanent member from the UN Security Council, they sound like they have never been educated. As if they are outside this profession and have no knowledge of what the UN or the Security Council is, why they were created and what significance these bodies have. This is why I mention primitive times and people living outside a civilisation, driven by instincts. They are only at the start of their evolution from an animal to a human state.

The same is happening here. They have an objective and that's that. They start moving towards it at the level of instinct, by any means, no matter how stupid or wild it looks, stopping at nothing, trampling over others, wading through slaughter, bypassing legal barriers. The United Nations was created as a platform for the conjugation of the policies of countries located at different poles, for them to find compromise, to ensure that force does not prevail over law, that law and legality prevail and humanity manifests responsibility and maturity in this international legal body's decisions. If we start shutting someone out of this information and analysis landscape, "muting their microphone" or simply not let them in, it will no longer be the United Nations, or a Security Council. It will be something else, completely unrelated to the UN. There are many formats where the West dominates, where they feel like little kings or gods, rulers, exceptionalist masters of the world, where they tell their yes-men what to do. There are many such organisations, including NATO, and now also the European Union. They have tried to establish a "summit for democracy" to replace the UN and show how they are ready to segregate everyone into inner and outer circles based on compliance with democratic ideals. Why do they need the UN as a world organisation if they feel better in those other formats? Then they should just leave the UN as it is. Or, if Russia isn't what they have a problem with, if they're just uncomfortable complying with the laws and rules of the UN, what are they doing there? They always want to impose their own unhealthy vision on everyone as the ultimate truth. This is classic neoliberal dictatorship.

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Question: On September 26, US Ambassador to Serbia Christopher Hill indicated that the United States was expecting clarifications from Serbia with regard to the signing of an annual plan for consultations between the foreign ministries of Serbia and Russia. Why do you think this document, which, according to Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, has been routinely signed between the two countries for 26 years now, is causing a sharp reaction from the EU and the United States? Is it possible that diplomat Hill misconstrued the nature of this document?

Maria Zakharova: Why are you asking me? Ask the United States why it is blackmailing other countries, talking rudely to them, telling them what to do, issuing orders and forcing them to act at its will. Go ahead and ask. We have made our position on this matter known.

We believe the American rules-based world order is immoral. Not just illegitimate, but immoral. If it were about a country, a state or a regime that uses its best qualities for the benefit of the world at large, we could give it a second thought. But they failed in this. They only know how to destroy and destabilise. They do use provocations, they frame others, pit nations against one another and engage in staged performances. We will respond to their actions like these when they speak, not even from a position of strength (they always say that Washington is acting from a position of strength, which is not true), but from the position of a rude bully.

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Question: In recent weeks, we have seen some Western countries and their leaders (who consider themselves mediators in the Armenian-Azerbaijani settlement) express, again, an openly biased position towards the parties. Let's just say that a particular country stands up for just one party in the talks. One gets the impression that there are forces out there that want to negatively impact the situation in the South Caucasus and provoke a clash of interests. What's your take on this? Is there a common positive trend in Azerbaijan and Armenia that has things moving towards signing a peace treaty? There is a lot of information on this, but it's not entirely clear what's going on in reality.

Maria Zakharova: Our leaders, our ministry and analysts have discussed this before and stated that a number of non-regional players were trying to destabilise a region that has just received a legitimate chance to get out of a drawn-out crisis or to transfer the unstable situation in Ukraine to another region of the post-Soviet space, including the South Caucasus. You can see attempts to destabilise the situation being made throughout the post-Soviet space. This is a very dangerous course to follow.

For its part, our country continues to pursue an energetic effort to de-escalate the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border while maintaining contact with Baku and Yerevan. Steps towards this end are being made by the CSTO as well. It is important to put in place a stable ceasefire agreement and to have all forces withdraw to their previous positions.

We are aware that a number of non-regional players would like to take credit for the peaceful settlement or the implementation of the peace agreements. We are not greedy and are always willing to share success. But what we are now seeing is a different turn of events with them trying to throw a wrench into the efforts to move these agreements forward. This is serious matter.

We operate on the premise that full compliance with the provisions of the tripartite statements by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia dated November 9, 2020, and January 11 and November 26, 2021 is the guarantee of stability in the South Caucasus. Given the circumstances, we consider it important to reinvigorate our efforts on all tracks, including the unblocking of economic and transport links in the region, delimiting the border and agreeing on a peace treaty.

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Question: That means Moscow is trying to curb a negative scenario?

Maria Zakharova: No. We are focused on implementing the existing agreements which, we believe, are a priority, and in many respects will help us avoid a destructive scenario, no matter who is standing behind it.

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Question: You are conducting a complex dialogue and it appears that mutual misunderstanding stems from the mismatched professionalism of the parties. Can you share the level of education and professional skills of at least some of the leading figures with whom you have to deal?

Maria Zakharova: It varies. There may be highly qualified counterparties, partners and allies, or even adversaries, with extensive professional experience. Or, it can be the other way round.

You've touched on an interesting subject, but it lies beyond diplomacy and is among the problems haunting current international relations. The situation has a greater dimension. We are talking about recruiting people to the Western political elite who, not professionals, (this is how the system works) who occupy or aspire to occupy high offices. It works out in different ways: they have always been party members, know how to attract an audience, enjoy popularity, and so on. When distributing government slots or positions that matter for implementing a particular policy in a particular area, problems arise, because these people have nothing in common with the profession. This is a general question for electoral democratic systems. You can appeal to people using professionalism, information technology, or other resources ranging from advertising to live communication. Anything goes. But the electoral cycles are followed by real work, which requires professional skills. There may be “lucky strikes” when people are initially strong organisers or, moving up the career ladder, they gain a certain level of professionalism as organisers and are then able to build a team of good professionals. But it is also possible for things to turn out differently. Unfortunately, “differently” has become a common occurrence and can be found in diplomacy, where people at the negotiating table have neither the tools, nor the knowledge, nor the talent. This concerns not only us. You can see all kinds of exotic professions converted into important positions in the West. So, this is a common problem. But it is rather from the realm of philosophy and political science. It is fun to speculate on, but I'm not sure it is part of my job to engage in this discussion.

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Question: It has been reported that Russian Ambassador to Slovakia, Igor Bratchikov, recently met with members of the Rusyn community. Can you offer more information on the meeting? Was it the Rusyn community's initiative? Did they address Russia with any issues concerning their current status?

Maria Zakharova: Indeed, our ambassadors, and not only Igor Bratchikov, meet and maintain contact with the officials and public organisations in their countries of presence as well as, by the way, opposition groups that used to be in power and remain publicly active after the power transition, and with ethnic groups, clergy, various associations, etc. This is what comprises the fabric of the bilateral relations that we talk about so often. We continue this work through our embassy in Slovakia.

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Question: On the territories that voted to join Russia, there are still foreign citizens who have been fighting for a long time to protect the Russian world. For example, Petr Michalu from the Czech Republic. What will their status be after the territories join Russia? Could it be that they can protect the Russian world but are not permitted to be on Russian territory?

Maria Zakharova: I do not want to give you a general answer. Each case is specific and should be considered individually. I am talking about the legal side of the situation. You are absolutely right: when life-changing decisions are made, the moral and emotional aspects are important. And legal and ethical aspects must be taken into account.

Let's start with specific individuals and see how it goes. If you are in contact with him or other foreign nationals, please send us a formal request with supporting documents and we will see what we can do.

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Question: How do you see relations between Russia and Latin America these days?

Maria Zakharova: Latin America is a friendly region to us. Russia and the Latin American countries mutually value the rich and multi-dimensional relations that we have been bound by for more than 150 years. We maintain a political dialogue on a wide range of issues on the global agenda, carry out mutually beneficial projects in the economy, promote cultural and humanitarian cooperation and education exchanges.

It is with satisfaction that we see the role of your region in international affairs is objectively growing. We consider this process an irreversible aspect of forming a multipolar and more democratic world order. We and Latin American countries share the importance of a dialogue, maintain open and honest communication, including on the matters where our positions differ and where we disagree. We listen to and hear each other's arguments.

This nature of our relations was once again confirmed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's meetings with Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and his counterparts from Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama on the sidelines of the political week during the 77th UN General Assembly in New York. There were many meetings over the course of these four days. We maintain a stable dialogue with a great number of countries in the region.

We understand very well that the Latin American countries experience pressure from Washington that not only wants to revive the notorious Monroe Doctrine to submit these countries to its own interests but to extend this vicious ideology to the rest of the world and turn it into its backyard.

As far as we are concerned, we are ready to develop our relations with our Latin American friends further, to the extent that they are interested. We seek to develop and intensify this cooperation, and our approach here is completely sincere.

We have never pursued an ideology of submitting another country, a partner, to our own interests. Ours is an ideology of integrating interests. We never force anybody to choose sides. It is a vicious practice. We clearly understand that it is not our way. We support mutually beneficial and respectful relations based on international law.

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Question: Will Russia encourage or call on Latin American countries to recognise the results of the referendums on Ukrainian soil?

Maria Zakharova: I have spoken a lot today about the referendums. Holding referendums in the DPR, LPR and Kherson and Zaporozhye regions is a matter of the will and self-determination of the people who live in those regions. This is a choice that's up to the people to make. For a long time they have tolerated being treated not as people, but as "sub-human species," as the President of Ukraine called them. This process is unfolding regardless of whether anyone likes it or not. These people have rights, too. They were born free, they're just like you and me – you in Peru, and me in Russia. They gave birth to children, they've raised an entire generation under the never-ending artillery fire ordered by the government that considered them its citizens. And this has been happening in the centre of Europe, the continent where many countries consider themselves the founders of modern civilisation. These are the countries that have initiated many international legal instruments to uphold human rights. I am confident that history will put everything in its place, and Russian-Latin American cooperation will include the new regions of the Russian Federation.

You have asked an interesting question – if Russia will do anything to encourage or call on countries to recognise the results. We're going to share facts; we're going to try to persuade you through reasoning, but I'd also like to remind you that these referendums were monitored by international experts and observers. Look at the unprecedented pressure they have to endure now just because they have visited that region to help uphold the very democracy that is so glorified in the West. Now about the way you phrased your question: encourage and call on, yes. That's the right and legitimate thing to do. Conversely, threats, blackmail, cancelling, intimidation or destruction aren't. This is exactly what the West has been doing, and making the Kiev regime do, and that has largely led to the tectonic shifts that we are now witnessing.

It would be great if you, as a journalist, pay attention to those international observers' reactions. Talk to them. These are people from different countries and regions who acted openly; they gave news conferences and interviews. They are available for comments, and they will tell you what and how they observed there.

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Question: How soon will Russian citizenship or passports be issued to people who voted to join Russia in the referendums?

Maria Zakharova: I understand that you are asking this question from Peru. Perhaps you have not been following the developments closely enough. Three years ago, in April 2019, Russian President's executive order granted citizens of the DPR, LPR and Ukraine the right to apply for Russian citizenship using a simplified procedure. This option has been available for three years.

In accordance with paragraph 3 of Presidential Executive Order No. 183, units of the Russian Interior Ministry are to consider such applications and adopt decisions within a period of three months from the date the application is submitted.

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Question: You are comparing Ukraine and the West to the Third Reich. Earlier, you talked about Babi Yar.

Maria Zakharova: Yesterday, I watched a 2020 interview with President of Russia Vladimir Putin once again. A journalist from TASS Russian News Agency asked him the very same question. He wanted to know whether President Putin believed that the United States of America was a fascist state. The President said that he did not believe this. The journalist then inquired whether President Putin was defending the United States against this description. Yes, you could say this, he replied. This is what the President of Russia said.

Regarding Ukraine, no. This description does not fit Ukraine in general either. But the regime, certain politicians that gained power following the unconstitutional coup, were indeed brought to the top with the help of this nationalist logic. They were brought to power by force, by nationalist neo-Nazi battalions. Those were organised and random groups at that time. I am talking about 2013 and 2014 now. Many of them were trained in camps in the Baltic countries and Poland. I do not want you to ascribe to us what we never said or claimed when you ask your question.

I will formulate your question: Why did you negotiate with Kiev and the Ukrainian authorities if you have such a low opinion of them? Is that what you want to ask? Perhaps, you did not follow this situation. I will remind you. In 2014, I was Deputy Director of the Information and Press Department. We discussed this many times. Indeed, it was impossible to recognise the results of the 2014 Ukrainian presidential elections and the new Kiev administration as legitimate. From the point of view of common sense, it was impossible to call Petr Poroshenko or that entire American-Canadian “gang” legitimate authorities. However, the Russian Federation recognised them but with the following reservation: while understanding the illegitimate nature of procedures used by them, we dealt with them because we wanted to give Ukraine, the state and these politicians a chance to peacefully resolve the crisis that they had organised because they acted on foreign orders.

That is to say, we basically see that you illegally took over, we know that this is an unconstitutional coup, and we see that you used force. However, you should change your approach, at least now. You should consider what happened in Crimea, a Ukrainian region. You should learn your lesson and conduct a unifying policy on Ukrainian territory without humiliating people along national, linguistic, ethnic and other lines. You should use this as a foundation. We will move forward with you while building on our relations. When the entire situation “nosedived” again in 2014, we gave them another chance, and we drafted the first package of the Minsk agreements. Later, we modified them and adopted a second package of the Minsk agreements together with France and Germany, and we tried to do our best to persuade them to honour these documents over the next seven years. We did this in order to give talks and diplomacy a chance. Our analysts talked about the “might” of the West that can allegedly accomplish anything everywhere at all times. For seven years, we watched the Western community try and reassemble what they had wrecked, but they failed.

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Question: You know that many people in Washington do not believe that Russia will be able to achieve the goals of its special military operation. What do you think? What is your answer to Washington?

Maria Zakharova: Washington should not either “believe” or “not believe” in this. Washington should believe in God. It is impossible to do so much injustice, simply relying on your exceptionalism. There are higher powers. I want to draw attention to the fact that the Americans have “In God We Trust” written not only in their fundamental doctrinal documents but even on their currency units. And if they do trust, then they must at least respect Him instead of violating justice and bringing so much suffering into this world, which, as we see, all the American regimes do. As for our goals and objectives, we will do everything to achieve them, as has been said. This is not a question of expanding territories, or of our financial power, or of our vision of this particular situation, but of how the world will develop further. Whether it will develop under the boot of those people who profess the logic of neoliberal totalitarianism, forbidding everyone else from having a different opinion and pursuing such dictatorial ambitions, or whether we all will still be free.

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Question: Do you have any evidence of US involvement in the attack on the Nord Stream pipeline?

Maria Zakharova: Read any detective story. What does it start with? With a search for those who had a motive. So far, we haven’t even had an opportunity to evaluate the technical condition of the pipeline. Yesterday, I talked about this specific issue with the experts that are dealing with the technical aspects. They told me it will take time.

We are saying that there is the notion of a motive and expressed intentions. Washington expressed both of these (I talked about this earlier). It has been saying for years that this is a threat to US national security. And we know how the US responds to threats to its national security – it destroys them. From their point of view, it doesn’t matter whether it’s right or wrong, if it has selected a target and declares that it threatens US national security (in this case, the US referred to energy, financial and political security). The US president promised to “bring an end” to it. The threat was removed. It hadn’t been removed since last February, as Karine Jean-Pierre said for some reason. I don’t know who slips her these prompts. She cited President Joseph Biden as saying that Germany would freeze the project, that it would be frozen. No. The US president said that when tanks crossed the borders and troops were deployed...

Germany spoke about “freezing” on February 22 of this year when nothing had happened yet. Russia launched its special military operation on February 24 of this year. But the project was not frozen after that either. You remember all these problems with turbines, prices and everything else. The project existed. It was functioning. Now it was supposed to operate at full swing capacity because the cold weather is coming and these energy resources are needed.

The US president said they would “bring an end” to the Russian Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline. Victoria Nuland said “...one way or another, Nord Stream 2 will not move forward.” She didn’t say they would do thus “legally,” or that “our partners will listen to us” or “we will use our entire economic might.” She said “one way or another” and added that it would be “a hunk of metal at the bottom of the ocean.” Do you need anything else to understand who could stand to gain from this?

I find it interesting to talk with you. After all, you are from the US, Yahoo News. A couple of years ago, I gave you a big interview, live. It is really interesting for me to discuss this issue with you.

Who is Radoslaw Sikorski? He is not simply Poland’s former foreign minister, albeit Poland is an absolute US satellite in the EU, and he not just a Euro deputy. He is part and parcel of US policy. His wife is a big public figure, a publicist (I think, she is a propagandist and a lobbyist of US foreign policy). He is tied to America as well. Sikorski thanked the US for this action in public. He said he merely expressed his opinion as to who could gain from this action and who had an opportunity to do it. He is linked with the American elite. In addition to everything else, he said that Poland stands to gain from it because for years every Polish government fought against this project. Do you want more evidence? What else do you need? Yes, an investigation and fact-finding are required. But we are sensible people and must hear who stands to gain from this and who has talked about it for years. Or, maybe we shouldn’t? Here comes US Secretary of State Antony Blinken who says that if it were an act of sabotage, this “would clearly not be in anyone’s interest.” How come? Not in anyone’s interest? Donald Trump talked about this for four years; Biden talked about it, as did Democrats and Republicans before him, starting with Condoleezza Rice. She told us in Russia how we should develop energy cooperation with others. What are you talking about? Or will we live in a surrealistic world?

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Question: What will you say in response? Is it a provocation or an act of terror?

Maria Zakharova: We will respond with an investigation. This is a must, and our law-enforcement bodies have already launched it. This is our property, resources, and infrastructure.

I was very interested in one thing. Why hasn't a single high-profile investigation been completed despite the use of omnipotent modern technology – outdoor security cameras, various tapping devices and extensive opportunities to record and transfer information? Everything seems to dissolve even though many of these crimes were committed “live,” like the assassination of President John Kennedy. But nobody knows anything. All loose ends are cleaned up.

There is hope that if we are talking about bombings – and the experts have no doubt that this was not caused naturally – this investigation should be carried out to completion. I would like to tell you something you may not know – an attack on civilian infrastructure that is related to the life support of civilians is defined as a terrorist act.

I hope that independent investigators in the US and maybe even in Europe (although, unfortunately there is no hope for Europe) will develop the desire to identify the involvement of the US secret services and any other body in what happened in the Baltic Sea on September 25-27. I know why many are silent. Because they see what was done to Julian Assange and what could be done to Edward Snowden. They understand this perfectly well and are silent because they are scared. Let me remind you that this concerns not just one country but the entire planet.

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